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**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
PO Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: CO-120-2011-0034-CX

PROJECT NAME: Hogback Road Hazard Tree Removal

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T. 2 N., R. 77 W., 6th P.M., Sections 3, 10

APPLICANT: BLM

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: The Hogback Road Hazard Tree Removal project includes 47 acres of public land near Granby, Colorado. The area has experienced heavy mountain pine beetle (MPB) mortality within the past 5 to 15 years. Studies have indicated that lodgepole pines killed by MPB begin falling five years after mortality. These forested stands are primarily comprised of lodgepole pine and aspen. Other tree species, including Engelmann spruce, Douglas-fir and subalpine fir, are present throughout the area. The Hogback road (BLM #2760) is frequently used by the public for driving, hunting access and horseback riding. Additionally, a commercial timber salvage sale has been awarded in the Hogback area (Refer to Hogback Too Salvage CO120-TS10-4). As dead trees begin to fall, they pose a threat to contract operators and public safety; this hazard would increase as tree failure begins to accelerate.

The BLM is proposing to use mechanical and/or hand treatments to harvest dead, currently infested and beetle/disease susceptible trees, and wind-throw susceptible trees on approximately 47 acres within the travel corridor accessing the salvage units. Additionally, the BLM is proposing timber stand improvement treatments (release and weed, and precommercial thinning) within the travel corridors to promote stand health and vigor. All treatments would take place within 100 feet of both sides of the travel corridor centerline.

Hazard tree removal within the travel corridor may be completed through commercial timber sales, force account, stewardship, or by other means. The primary purpose of the proposed action is to reduce the threat posed by falling trees to contract operators and the public. In addition, treatment would facilitate natural regeneration in these stands. Trees that would likely be wind-thrown post-harvest would be removed. All lodgepole pine trees seven inches or greater diameter breast height (DBH), as well as other tree species seven inches or greater DBH may be designated by the BLM for removal if they are dead, disease/insect infested, or otherwise damaged. These tree species may include, but are not limited to, Douglas-fir, aspen, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce. Dead or beetle-hit lodgepole pine trees that are five to six inches

DBH would also be designated for removal. Healthy live lodgepole pine and other conifer species less than seven inches DBH and other conifer trees would be retained where feasible. Smaller diameter lodgepole pine (1-6 inch DBH) may be cut to remove damaged, dead, diseased, or beetle-hit trees, or to reduce stand densities to improve tree vigor.

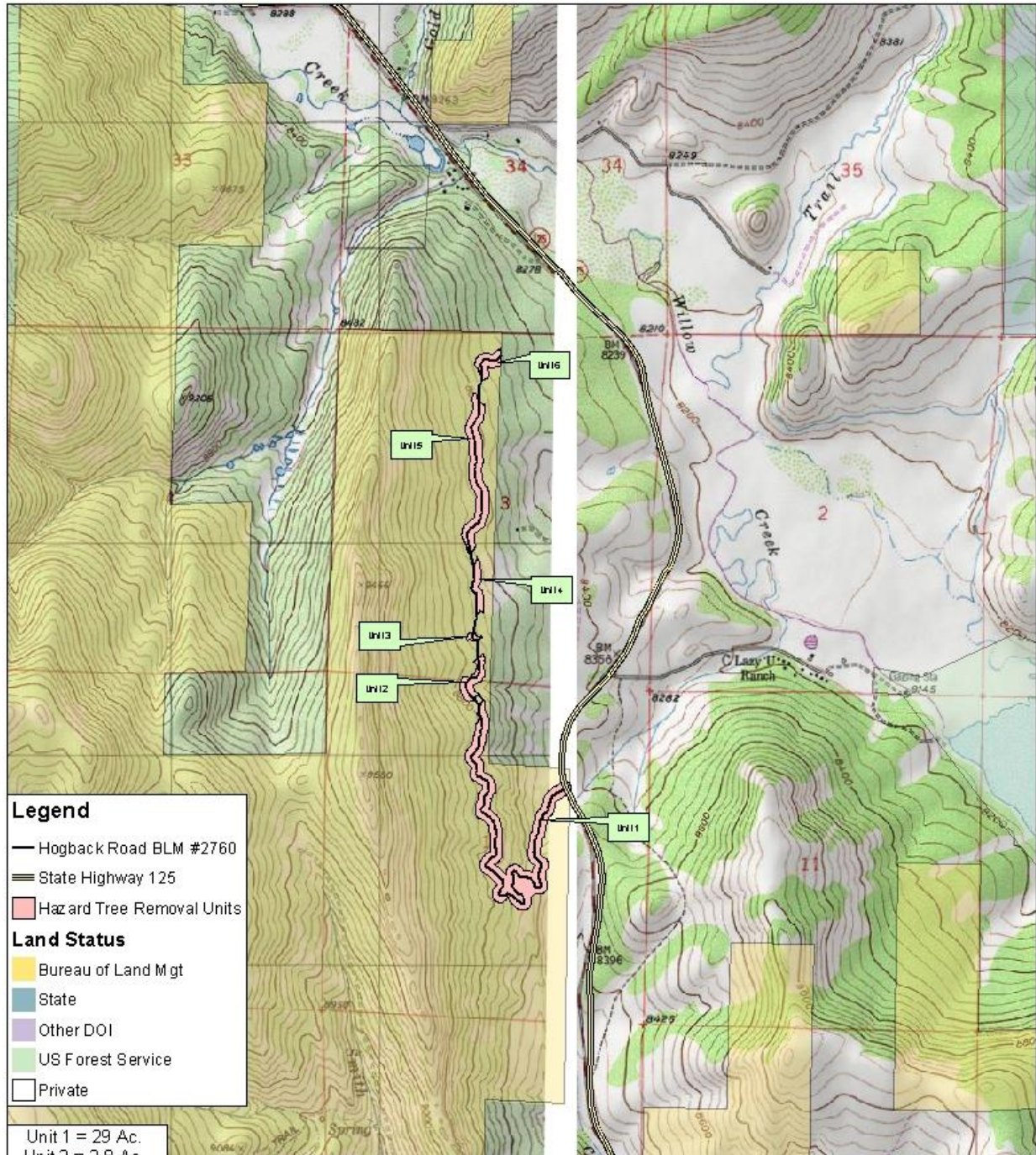
Sound cull logs and larger diameter tops would be offered for sale as biomass or decked onsite to be disposed of at a later date. Slash material remaining after harvest operations would be lopped and scattered, or piled for later burning by the BLM. Some slash may be left onsite to provide soil protection; the depth of the slash would not exceed 24 inches.

Post harvest treatments may include a release and weed/thinning treatment (i.e. felling of residual undesirable trees), and noxious weed control. The BLM would monitor disturbed areas for noxious weeds for two growing seasons after project completion. If noxious weed control is found necessary, actions would be coordinated by the BLM.

Design Features of the Proposed Action:

- Vegetative buffers for wetland and riparian areas would be required to protect wetland vegetation and to reduce sediment deposition in the wetlands. No vehicles or large equipment would operate within the buffer. Limited surface disturbance would be allowed within the buffers:
 - -50 foot buffer for small drainages (intermittent and ephemeral)
 - -100 foot buffer for perennial streams.
- Fences and other improvements damaged from the hazard tree removal operation would be repaired or replaced by the contractor.
- No mechanical equipment would be allowed to travel in a wetland or riparian area. If areas must be crossed, best management practices would be required to reduce alteration of the hydrology or vegetation.
- Survey monuments (brass cap monuments, bearing trees, mineral claim posts, etc.) would be located, flagged and protected.
- If an active goshawk nest is located within a timber sale unit, a 1/8th mile buffer around the nest site would be required.
- Harvesting operations would be limited to winter and after-the-thaw dry summer/fall periods.
- If significant fossils are discovered during the preliminary inventory or during monitoring, a professional Paleontologist would be hired by BLM to complete a professional inventory and/or complete any needed mitigation.
- Signage would be placed on State Highway 125 and Hogback Road notifying the public of heavy truck traffic during harvest operations.
- When possible the project would occur outside the big game hunting seasons between August 15 and December 15.
- Outfitters with valid Special Recreation Permits within the project area would be notified of when the project would commence. (There are three SRPs in this area authorized for guided horseback rides and actively use the area.)
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Hogback Road Hazard Tree Removal



Legend

- Hogback Road BLM #2760
- == State Highway 125
- Hazard Tree Removal Units

Land Status

- Bureau of Land Mgt
- State
- Other DOI
- US Forest Service
- Private

Unit 1 = 29 Ac.
 Unit 2 = 2.8 Ac.
 Unit 3 = 5 Ac.
 Unit 4 = 1.8 Ac.
 Unit 5 = 10.5 Ac.
 Unit 6 = 2.4 Ac.

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 Total Area = 47 Ac.

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 Miles

1:24,000

No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the Accuracy, Reliability, or Completeness of this Data for Individual Use or Aggregate Use with Other Data.

Matt Schiltz 6/21/2011
 BLM, Kremmling FO
 USGS Map: Cabin Creek, Trail Mtn.
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PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

Date Approved: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

Decision Number/Page: II-6, page 10

Decision Language: *“To manage all productive forest land that is suitable for producing a variety of forest products on a sustained yield basis. This action will create a healthy forest environment through continued forest management practices.”*

The Proposed Action was designed in conformance with bureau standards and incorporates the Colorado BLM Standards for Public Land Health.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11, Number: 11.9 (C)(9), *“Commercial and non-commercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 miles of temporary road construction.”* None of the following extraordinary circumstances in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes	No
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety		X
2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)].		X
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on		X

the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		
2.9 Violate a Federal Law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		X
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		X

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Review Completed
Cynthia Landing	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation and Range Mgt	
Megan McGuire	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Species and Wildlife	7/1/2011
Bill B. Wyatt	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources	7/11/2011
Bill B. Wyatt	Archaeologist	Tribal Consultation	7/11/2011
Bill B. Wyatt	Archaeologist	Paleontology	7/11/2011
Paula Belcher	Hydrologist	Soil, Water, Air, and Riparian	6/28/2011
John Monkouski	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Transportation and Access	7/3/2011

REMARKS:

COMPLIANCE PLAN: Contract administration would occur per contract regulations. Post harvest treatments may include a release and weed/thinning treatment (i.e. felling of residual undesirable trees), and noxious weed control. The BLM would monitor disturbed areas for noxious weeds for two growing seasons after project completion.

NAME OF PREPARER: Matthew Schiltz and Jamie Geerdes, Forestry Technicians

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Susan Cassel

DATE: 7/13/11

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this CER and have decided to implement the proposed action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 12 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an extraordinary circumstance and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Susan Cassel

DATE SIGNED: 7/13/11